

In the Specification

[0029] (Currently Amended) Turning to the figures, a detailed discussion of the media rating enforcement system and method of the present invention is provided. Fig. 3A shows a schematic representation of a consumer electronics system 100, and in particular a television system, constructed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention to include a passive media rating enforcement system. It should be noted that the consumer electronics system 100 is not to be limited to a television system, but can include any type of system that receives information that a parent might find objectionable, such as, e.g., a video cassette recorder (VCR), audio equipment and computer equipment. In general, the consumer electronic device receives a content signal that provides content to a viewer/user in the form of audio/visual ~~information~~ information. In regard to the television system 100, it receives a television program signal S_{TV} , and absent intervention, provides a program to a viewer in the form of audio/visual information. The television system 100 includes enforcement system circuitry 102, commonly referred to as the "V-chip", that can be programmed by a user, such as, e.g., a parent, to selectively limit exposure of any programs to children that the user feels contain inappropriate subject matter. In particular, the "V-chip" circuitry 102 can be programmed to block the program signal S_p if the content of the program meets certain criteria selected by the user for a particular viewer present in the viewing area and identified by the facial recognition system 128.

[0045] (Currently Amended) Within the main menu 151, the user may select the "Parental Lock" menu item, which takes the user to the "Lock Password Entry Screen" 152. A password, preferably known only by the parents (~~administrator~~ administrator), is entered via the numeric keys 172. If the correct password is entered, the user is taken to the "Lock" menu 153. If an incorrect password is entered, the user is not taken to the "Lock" menu 153, and the words "try again" are displayed. In the "Lock" menu 153, the user can select the "V-Chip" selection to configure or disable the "V-chip" circuitry 102, the "Lock by Time" selection to alternatively enable or disable a complete lock of the TV based on the time of day, and the "Front Panel Lock" selection to alternatively enable or disable a lock of the front control panel of the TV. If the user selects "V-Chip", the user is taken to the "V-Chip" menu and can then select "Viewer" or "Public" to enable the "V-chip" circuitry 102 to analyze the program signal with (viewer mode) or without (public mode) regard to individual viewers, or "Off" to disable the "V-chip" circuitry 102.

[0050] (Currently Amended) As currently dictated by the FCC, certain subject matter categories can be selected only if certain television ratings have been selected. For instance, category FV can only be selected if TV-Y7 has been selected. Category D can only be selected if TV-PG or TV-14 has been selected. Categories L, S and V can only be selected if TV-PG, TV-14 or TV-MA has been selected. Thus, the selection of categories enhances the television rating selected by the user. For instance, if television rating TV-14 and category S is selectively allowed, then all programs rated TV-MA are blocked and all programs containing sexual situations are blocked. Thus, the discretionary aspect of a selected television rating can be supplemented by further selecting a subject matter category. As can be appreciated any ~~permutation~~ permutation of ratings and subject matter category may be used as a result. For example, (see Fig. 7) the following combinatory content-based specifications C_S can be created: TV-Y7 FV, TV-PG D, TV-PG L, TV-PG S, TV-PG V, TV-14 D, TV-14 L, TV-14 S, TV-14 V, TV-MA L, TV-MA S, TV-MA V, TV-PGDS, TV-PGDL, TV-PGDSV, TV-PGDLS, TV-PGDLSV, TV-PGDLV, TV-PGDLSV, TV-14DS, TV-14DL, TV-14DV, TV-14DLS, TV-14DSV, TV-14DLV, TV-14DLSV, TV-MALS, TV-MASV, TV-MALV, TV-MALSV, etc. Some programs, such as, e.g., news and sports, are not rated or are un-rated. In this case, the user can select to allow all non-rated programs or block all non-rated programs. If the TV rating is OFF, non-rated programs cannot be selected.

[0062] (Currently Amended) The user entry system 216, and in particular the remote control unit 218 (shown in detail in Fig. 6), preferably is the operative device through which the user can interact with the menu system 250. Within the main menu 251, the user may select the "Parental Lock" menu item, which takes the user to the "Lock Password Entry Screen" 252. A password, preferably known only by the parents (~~administrator~~ administrator), is entered via the numeric keys 172. If the correct password is entered, the user is taken to the "Lock" menu 253. If an incorrect password is entered, the user is not taken to the "Lock" menu 253, and the words "try again" are displayed. In the "Lock" menu 253, the user can select the "V-Chip" selection to configure or disable the "V-chip" circuitry 202, the "Lock by Time" selection to alternatively enable or disable a complete lock of the TV based on the time of day, and the "Front Panel Lock" selection to alternatively enable or disable a lock of the front control panel of the TV. If the user selects "V-Chip", the user is taken to the "V-Chip" menu and can then select "Viewer" or "Public" to enable the "V-chip" circuitry 202 to analyze the program signal with (viewer mode) or without (public mode) regard to individual viewers, or "Off" to disable the "V-chip" circuitry 202.